**Watauga Butchery Member & Customer Guidelines – November 2021**

When the pandemic hit, we and many other small local farmers were left with no outlet to process our meat, with slaughterhouses across the country booked up for over a year. Watauga Butchery was created in the midst of the pandemic to help alleviate that issue, and many farmers came together to discuss how we as a community in Watauga County could work to solve the problem. That inspired us to create a membership program so that our local farmers and regular loyal customers could commit to support the new venture, and in return have assurance that they won’t be shut out of processing again, and will always have a local processing partner.

The membership program outlined below is designed around that idea. Members may purchase an annual membership, which gives them access to discounted rates on advance bookings, savings on other costs, and preferred bookings and status on waitlists – kind of like a frequent flyer program.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Membership Levels**

**Farm Member - $350/year for more than 7 beef/year ($295 for Watauga County farmers)**

*\*Small Farm Rate for up to 6 beef/year - $150 ($125 for Watauga County farmers)*

* Preferred status on waitlist
* 5% discount off all processing services with bookings made and kept at least 60 days in advance
* $50 discount on annual renewals
* No booking deposits (as long as no no-shows/last minute cancellations)
* 50% off label setup charge (requires proof of meat handler’s license for retail sale, and label approval for any claims)
* Inventory report

**Premium Farm Member - $1,200/year ($975 Watauga County Residents)**

* First priority on waitlist
* 10% discount off all processing services with bookings made and kept at least 60 days in advance
* $50 discount on annual renewals
* Dedicated allocated capacity based on projections
* No booking deposits (as long as no no-shows/last minute cancellations)
* 50% off label setup charge (requires meat handler’s license for retail sale, and label approval for any claims)
* Inventory report
* Custom pricing available for repetitive cut sheets

**Retail Customer/Non-Member**

* $25 booking deposit, currently deferred during COVID for customers in good standing; waitlist as available.

Our membership year is from October thru September, renewing annually. Mid-year enrollment is prorated quarterly.

Note: membership in the Watauga Butchery Membership Program provides customer status, and does not convey any ownership, equity interest, or other rights beyond the membership privileges defined in this document.

**PRICING**

Pricing schedule for our services is posted on our website – see attached for current pricing, subject to change. Payment is required at time of pick-up.

**SCHEDULING**

WB currently uses third party partners for inspected slaughter of both USDA inspected and custom exempt (field slaughter), so our scheduling involves coordinating both slaughter and processing. Advanced planning plays a critical role in the successful implementation of these logistics and late changes can cause a major disruption to our process and efficiency. Additionally, our process and pricing are designed around this with the goal to serve as many farmers as possible.

**Processing Scheduling**

* Members and customers may book processing appointments up to 6 months in advance using our online platform at <https://wataugabutchery.setmore.com/>
	+ As always, you can still call the office at (828) 484-6328 for booking as well
* 50% of available booking slots more than 60 days out are reserved for members only
* At 60 days out, all open booking slots become open to all customers; therefore, we strongly encourage members to utilize the advanced priority window in order to ensure your processing needs are met.
* Members will receive priority waitlist status for booking slots that come open

**Other Scheduling Guidelines**

* All beef going off farm for slaughter must have *contemporaneous birth records* provided upon drop-off which clearly document that the animal is less than 30 months old. We do not at this time have the ability to process beef older than 30 months under USDA inspection.
* There is a $25 fee applied to cancellations within 14 days of appointment, and a $50 charge for no-shows, to offset the cost of lost production.

**DROP-OFF & SLAUGHTER**

Because we use an off-site slaughter facility, we have different processes for USDA inspected and for field slaughter (called “custom exempt”):

* **For USDA inspected slaughter**, animals are dropped off at Shipley Farms in Vilas, currently once a week, for transport to the slaughter facility. Transportation fees - **$20 per head large animals (beef) /$7 per head small animals (sheep and hogs)**
* We then bring carcasses back to WB for processing. Customers who wish to transport animals directly to slaughter should contact our office.
* All communications about inspected slaughter should be coordinated with Watauga Butchery – please do not contact the slaughterhouse directly, as that creates confusion for all parties.
* **On-Farm/field slaughter (uninspected)** is contracted locally/fees determined and paid to slaughter team, dependent on both weather and available space in the hanging cooler. Contact the office for scheduling field slaughter. Animals slaughtered without inspection must be packaged and labeled “Not for Resale.”

**Birth Records and Red Tags**

* The USDA requires all beef 30 months of age or older to be red tagged, meaning they have the head and spine removed, sequestered, and marked as inedible. This is a federal law established as a control for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and applies to every USDA inspected slaughter facility nationwide.
* For inspected slaughter of beef, all customers MUST provide contemporaneous (clearly documented at time of birth) birth records demonstrating the age of the animal is under 30 months old, in order to minimize the chance of animals being red-tagged by USDA inspection for BSE risk.
* In rare cases, animals, including other species, may be condemned for other reasons, at the discretion of the inspector, including disabled, non-ambulatory, or otherwise ill animals
* We cannot guarantee, even with clearly documented birth records provided, that an animal will not be red-tagged or condemned. **This red-tag and condemnation process is a matter of federal law, it is completely out of our hands, and the decision of the USDA Inspector is final.** We must pay additional fees and incur substantial costs to handle the by-product of red-tagged animals. The slaughterhouse must stop their production line and clean and sanitize the equipment, and that cost is passed on to us. **Under no circumstances should any member directly contact the USDA, North Carolina Department of Agriculture, or any other regulatory or governmental agency in an attempt to overrule, appeal, dispute, or argue a ruing of an inspector, as doing so can jeopardize our relationship with our slaughter partners, as well as their status with the inspector.** Customers who violate this policy forfeit all membership privileges and risk losing processing privileges at Watauga Butchery, in addition to any and all costs, penalties, and fees associated with the inspection event.
* In the event of an animal being red-tagged, the slaughterhouse removes and sequesters all spinal material, and returns to us the usable remainder of the carcass in multiple pieces. Because of this process, the butchering of a red-tagged animal will not yield the same quality of cuts as a normal animal.
* In the event of an animal being condemned, the slaughterhouse is required to sequester the carcass to keep it out of the food system, and no product will be returned. In that case, Watauga Butchery will pass through any fees and charges we incur from the slaughterhouse, and will do all we can to minimize the additional cost you incur.

**CUTSHEETS**

* In order to allow adequate time to ensure clear cutting instructions, we require cut sheets for each animal to be submitted on the same day as the animal is delivered for slaughter.
* A $30 fee is charged for late delivery of cut sheets.
* If we do not have cutting instructions in advance of processing, or if instructions provided are unclear or conflicting and we are unable to get clarification in time, Watauga Butchery will proceed to butcher customers’ animals according to our default/recommended cut sheets, or according to the best judgment of the head butcher on duty, and we will attempt to maximize the value and usability of your particular animal without incurring additional charges for you, unless you have directed us otherwise.
	+ USDA inspected product will be cut according to our Recommended Retail Cut Sheet, and custom exempt product will be cut according to our Recommended Freezer Beef Cut Sheet.
* **We are not able to stop, delay, rearrange, or reschedule processing to accommodate changes or clarifications on cut sheets.**
* We welcome members to put standard default cut sheets on file if they prefer.
* Samples of our default recommended cut sheets, as well as cut sheet templates, are available on our website, or can be emailed to you by request.
* It is the farmer/producer’s responsibility to provide all cut sheets and coordinate with any requests or instructions from your customers.
* We welcome customers to make special requests for unique cuts, and you may contact our office to discuss. Subject to labor and schedule, so that we can continue to serve as many farmers as possible, we may at times reject some requests due to capacity.

**PROCESSING**

**Processing**

* We hang carcasses for 3-7 days before processing
* At this time, we are not able to provide extended dry aging
* Processing fees are available on our website, or by request from the office

**Packaging and Labeling**

* Most product is packaged in vacuum sealed plastic
* Retail (inspected) product is packed individually. Custom Exempt product is packed as efficiently as possible, normally with two steaks to a pack
* All USDA Inspected product is labeled for resale with federally required Safe Handling Instructions as well as our USDA plant number and stamp, and other required information, along with the name of the cut and weight of the product
	+ Standard labels include our Watauga Butchery name, logo, and address
	+ Custom labels can be developed for members to include your name, logo, and contact information for a one-time label set-up fee. For additional requests, including adding pricing, bar codes, and/or product claims, contact our office to discuss options and costs.
* Custom Exempt product will be packed and labeled according to the most efficient process for our shop, which may or may not include a label and weight.

**Value Added Processing**

* At present, we are only able to provide bulk sausage and formed patties. We plan to provide more value-added processing capability in the future including link sausage equipment.

**PICK-UP & HANDLING**

* We are limited on cooler space, and cannot store finished product for customers. Product not picked up within 3 days will be charged a $2 per box/crate storage fee. We are working to add capacity to ease the strain on storage space.
* We use vacuum sealing plastic bags for most of our packaging, and include bone guards where appropriate. Even so, plastic packaging can be damaged if not properly handled and stored.
* Customers should inspect product, packaging, and labels upon pickup, and identify any concerns to us at that time. Once the product is received into the customer’s custody, it is deemed to be accepted. Per the USDA, once product leaves our custody and control, we are not able to repackage or relabel food product.
* Pickup should occur during our regular operating hours between 8 AM and 4 PM, Monday through Friday. Please schedule an appointment and call ahead so that we know to expect you and can have your product ready. Our facility is not open to outside visitors because of COVID restrictions; therefore, our doors are closed and locked even during operating hours.
* We generally do not have staff available to arrange pickup after hours. Please call the office if you have special considerations and we will do our best to help you.
* We accept payment by cash or check. There is a $35 fee for returned checks.
* Due to WB’s limited cooler space, product left longer than 7 days, without a pickup plan from the customer, will be considered abandoned. When we reach a point that abandoned product fills the cooler to the point that it inhibits our ability to operate, abandoned product will be donated to Freedom Farms, FARM Café, Samaritan’s Purse, or another food shelter or local ministry. We will make every effort to get in touch with the customer to make arrangements for pickup prior to taking this step. The customers would still be held responsible for the processing costs.

**OTHER GUIDELINES**

* We will do the best we can to communicate any and all disruptions and changes as quickly as possible and avoid surprises whenever we can.
* In the event of labor, material, or other shortages or issues beyond our control that limit our capacity, we give priority to first taking care of our members, and also our long-time customers and local farmers, prior to serving new outside business.

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

The above Watauga Butchery Member and Customer Guidelines define the terms and conditions of the agreement between Watauga Meats and Butchery, LLC and the Member or Customer designated below. By signing this agreement and paying the applicable Membership Annual Subscription, Member acknowledges he or she has read, understands, and agrees to abide by the rules and processes defined for membership, and that failure to abide by these rules, processes, and procedures may result in forfeiture of membership rights and privileges and of any prorated fees.

**Membership Level:**

[ ]  Small Farm ($150) [ ]  Farm Member ($350) [ ]  Premium Farm Member ($1,200) [ ]  Retail (non-member)

**Membership Status: Watauga County Farm?** (discounted)

[ ]  New Member [ ]  Renewal ($50 off) [ ]  Yes [ ]  No

**Membership Due**: $     \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I attest that I am authorized to sign on behalf of the business/organization listed below, if applicable, and that I/we will abide by the policies defined above and be responsible for all fees and charges we incur.

**Acknowledged:**

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Member Farm/Organization Name Address

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Representative Name Contact Info (Phone/email)

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Signed Date

**Received/Accepted:**

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Watauga Butchery Representative Date